

## 2020 UPSFF Study Findings: English Language Learners

**ELL student outcomes improved in elementary grades, yet proficiency gaps increased for middle and high school ELL students.**

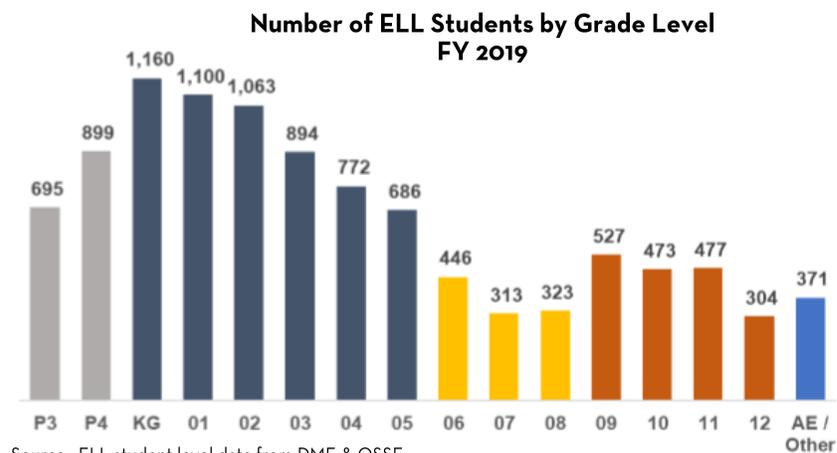
According to the [2020 UPSFF Study](#), the number of English Language Learner (ELL) students in DC increased significantly over the last several fiscal years. This study also shows overall improvement for ELL student outcomes from FY2017 to FY2019, particularly in elementary school; however, proficiency gaps increased for middle and high school ELL students compared to those who are not or no longer ELL. For more information on the UPSFF refer to this [policy document](#).

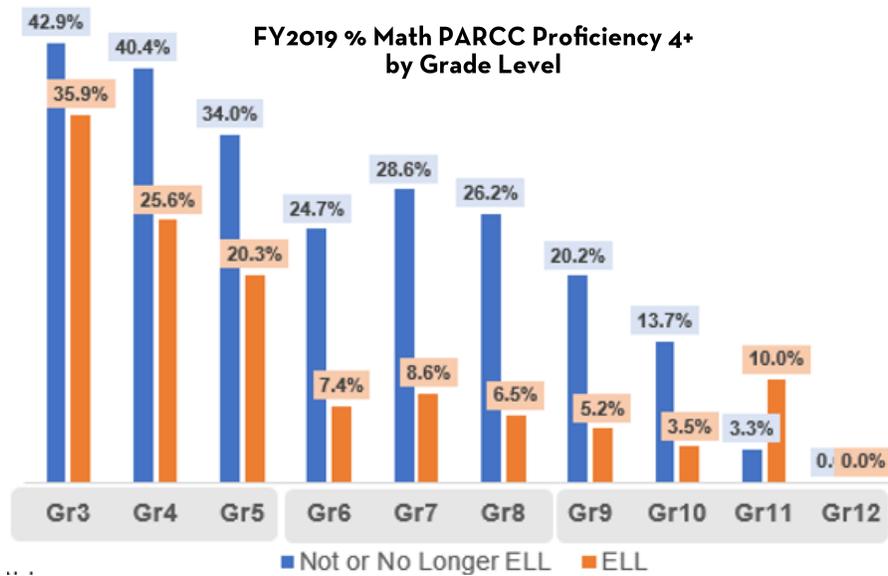
### ELL Student Population Trends

The number of students identified as ELL increased by 50% from FY2015 to FY2020, with the most significant impact on DCPS. One reason for the increases in ELL identifications were changes to the language proficiency assessment, [WIDA ACCESS](#). In 2017, this national test became more rigorous which resulted in more students keeping their ELL status longer in DC. Students in DC scoring between 1 and 5 on the WIDA ACCESS test qualify for ELL services and exit from the ELL designation after scoring above 5. Higher WIDA scores

(3+) indicate higher English proficiency while lower scores (between 1.0 and 2.9) indicate lower language proficiency and greater service needs.

Although there is a larger proportion of ELL students in grades K-5 compared to grades 6-12, the proportion of ELL students in high school is much larger in DC than the national average. LEAs indicated that ELL students in high school with lower WIDA scores require more academic supports and resources than younger students with lower WIDA scores. Students who are new to the county and those with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) of any age were also identified as requiring significant supports, but less performance data are available for these specific sub-groups.





Notes:  
 ELL students counted: FY15 - FY19 students flagged as "Yes" for English Learner Status and "Yes" for Enrollment Audit Population. Including Valid PARCC scores only. PARCC scores used for valid scores reported from students in UPSFF grade levels 3-12 only. There are significantly fewer test takers (and data points) for grades 11 and 12.  
 Source: [2020 UPSFF Study](#), [ELL Weight Structure](#)

### ELL Student Performance Trends

Since 2017, ELL students in elementary grades with higher WIDA scores have decreased proficiency gaps on the [PARCC](#) test while the gap for ELL students with lower WIDA scores in elementary grades and ELL students in the middle and high school grades increased compared to those not or no longer ELL.

ELL students with a 3+ WIDA score in grades 3-5 made the most significant gains on both the math and English language arts (ELA) PARCC tests. For secondary students, there was an overall increase in proficiency gaps from FY2017 to FY2019, with the most pronounced FY2019 gaps in ELA for grades 6-10. The greatest achievement gaps on the 2019 math PARCC between ELL and not or no longer ELL students were in grades 6-8. In FY2019, ELL student math proficiency levels dropped substantially from 5th to 6th grade, and stayed at those low levels through the

middle and high school grades.

### Aligning the UPSFF to Student Need

The 2020 UPSFF Study identified multiple options to more effectively target funding to ELL students with the greatest need. Options include “tiering” funding for ELL students based on grade level, targeting funding for students with lower WIDA ACCESS proficiency levels, additional funding for students designated as new to the country and/or SLIFE, or some combination of these options. The tiered funding options differentiate groups of students based on their grade band. Possible tiers are:

- elementary, middle, and high school,
- PK-8 and high school, or
- PK-5 and grades 6-12 students.

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